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## JUDAS ISCARIOT.

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Many ingenious suggestions have been made to mitigate our condemnation of Judas. It accords with the temper of our day to speak charitably of him. The theory that he was "only a commonplace sinner" finds advocates.

At the outset, it is thought, he was as honest and earnest as any of the apostles. Possibly even in the betrayal he only intended to hasten on the Messianic kingdom, knowing the miraculous powers of his master, and thinking that if a crisis were precipitated it would lead to a speedier triumph. At worst, he was playing a deep game, anticipating that Jesus would, as on former occasions, slip from the grasp of his would-be captors, and that then he (Judas) would enjoy the sight of their chagrin and the thirty pieces of silver at the same time.

But all such suggestions are purely unfounded guesses. All that we know of Judas is in the New Testament, and every word points one way. All that is said of him is very brief; if printed together it would occupy hardly more than a single page. Every one of those brief sentences reads like a knell of doom. The sum of the testimony is that Judas was from first to last a monster of cool and devilish wickedness.

The gentle Saviour, who in Gethsemane excused the sleep of the disciples, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"; who at Calvary said of his murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"—never spoke of Judas but in words that chill the blood. "Did I not choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" "The Son of man goeth even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born." "While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition."

The evangelist John, the beloved disciple and the theolo-

gian of love, is unsparing in severity upon Judas. Judas, according to John, was a liar and a thief. "Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein." John tells us that "after the sop, then entered Satan into him."

When the apostles, as narrated in the first chapter of the book of Acts, came to fill up the vacancy in their number, they prayed, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he take the place in this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas fell away, that he might go to *his own place*." The 109th Psalm is the most terrible passage in all Scripture. In it "no less than thirty anathemas have been counted." There is only one individual in all history to whom we have scriptural warrant to apply it—that person is Judas, to whom Peter found a reference in it on this occasion.

If inspiration tells us that Judas was a hypocrite, a thief, a traitor, a devil, one into whom Satan entered, a suicide, a son of perdition, for whom it would have been better not to have been born, one who left the company of the redeemed to go to his own place remote from God,—all thought of human defense or extenuation is precluded. In silence and in horror we contemplate the perdition of a guilty soul.

But does not the subsequent sorrow and suicide of Judas show that there was some right feeling left in him? No; the suicide was a crowning act of petulance, unbelief and selfishness. Judas knew the gentleness of Jesus, yet he would not, like Peter, seek his pardon. He possessed one-twelfth of the trained preparation for telling the story of Jesus to a world in darkness, but he carried that knowledge away with him out of the world. The suicide of Judas was a gross insult to the divine love, which none knew better than he, and a cruel unfaithfulness to the interests of all mankind.

The first question that comes is why Jesus ever chose such a man into the number of the apostles. It was not in ignorance of his true character; for we are expressly told that "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him." We come here unexpectedly upon one of the most touching proofs of the completeness of our Lord's humiliation. Jesus never used his superhuman powers to shield himself from human trials.

He would not make stones bread when alone in the wilderness; but afterwards he fed five thousand fainting men. He touched the ear of the high-priest's servant and healed it; but he let his own wounds bleed. We know that he never saved himself a weary step, a pang, a blow which would have come to any mere man in the same place. The cruelest injury that any man can suffer is to be betrayed by a trusted friend; and therefore it was necessary that Jesus should bear this too. And so, in choosing his intimates, Jesus chose as men must—by fairness of profession, by the outward appearance, by natural endowments, and by general reputation.

Jesus never allowed his superhuman knowledge to save him a pain, but how many it must have added. He knew Judas from the first; he knew his hollowness, his secret profanity, his unbelief, his petty thieving, his smooth-tongued hypocrisy, his murderous treachery. The life of Jesus was spent in the daily society of Judas. He walked with him, he ate with him, he prayed with him. Judas was admitted into all the sacred privacies of that life of loving labors and measureless sorrows.

Did any mere man ever suffer a trial so great as this? Was there ever a greater victory than this—to carry out to the end a plan of gentleness and frankness, face to face with treachery? Jesus felt all the pain of Judas' presence; yet he was not silenced by it, was not embittered by it, was not defeated by it. He washed Judas' feet with the rest, he dipped into the dish with him as with the rest. The serpent which human vision could not detect he saw creeping closer, but would not shield himself from the deadly sting.

Thus we see that a right estimate of the awful wickedness of Judas is necessary that we may appreciate the love and sufferings of our Saviour, and also that we may receive the full benefit of his example when disheartened by the discovery of gross wickedness within the church of to-day. Since the Christian era probably the wickedest men of each generation have been within the pale of the Christian church; yet their presence is no argument against the truth of Jesus and no more an excuse to us for unfaithfulness than the hypocrisy of Judas was a reason why Mary should fail to break her alabaster box of ointment.